

The
AQUINO
MANAGEMENT
Of The
PRESIDENCY



Foundations for Policy Making

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Published by the
Presidential Management Staff
Office of the President
Manila, Philippines
June 1992

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Editorial and Visual Office – PMS

Printing

NEDA Secretariat – APO

Foreword

"OURS IS A government that came to power borne on the shoulders of our people; we must, therefore, govern on the basis of that same people power".

These were the very words of President Corazon C. Aquino - words that laid the foundation of the highest office of the land. For six years and four months, her people-powered presidency reflected itself in the very nature of the executive branch and on the implementation of several projects closest to the President's heart; closest, because they touched the warp and woof of our people's aspirations.

To document in part her people-powered presidency, we have compiled this series of volumes titled *The Aquino Management of the Presidency*. This volume is the first part of the series and attempts to outline the evolution of the support offices and the various management tools and technology employed in the decision-making and decision dissemination processes in the Office of the President. The second part of the series provides a chronicle of some specific undertakings initiated by the Office of the President which, now, constitute part of the legacies of the Aquino government. The third part of the series is a summation of the Aquino government's performance during its six years in office.

This volume, "Foundations for Policy Making", offers a glimpse at the inner workings of and the people in the Office of the President. It also shows the many

technologies and processes utilized to set directions and policy thrusts of the Aquino administration.

This series of volumes, *The Aquino Management of the Presidency*, is by no means a complete coverage of the legacies of the Aquino presidency. Some of those not documented here are contained in materials better covered by other line agencies or academic groups.

Some of President Aquino's legacies, however, will find no archive to preserve them for posterity. One would have to look at the faces and listen to the hearts of the people she touched in order to find them.

Aniceto M. Sobrepeña

Cabinet Secretary

and

Head, Presidential Management Staff

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Organizing Management Support

When Corazon C. Aquino took over the reins of government in February 1986, she was confronted with enormous problems that the dictator left behind. The government coffers were empty. The economy was on a dive. The military was politicized. Democratic institutions and processes were savaged. To make matters worse, she inherited an uninspired bureaucracy that was primed to respond only to the ways of an authoritarian hand.

Six years later, the "walang alam" housewife, as her predecessor derisively

called her, successfully completed her term – with democratic institutions and processes reestablished, military rehabilitated, bureaucracy energized, and economy turned around.

And yet, the presidency was far from what Corazon Aquino had been trained to handle. She simply was a housewife who had been thrust by fate to lead her country out of the devastation of a 14-year plunderous dictatorship. It was an overwhelming task, even for an expert. But President Aquino proved equal to the job.

Her recognition of her initial limitations as well as her instinctive management style served well her sincere desire to do what must be done. Immediately upon assuming office, she sought guidance and assistance from her old allies in the fight against the dictatorship. Her first Cabinet was a mix of human rights lawyers, businessmen, street parliamentarians, and with an old Marcos associate – the leader of the mutiny that triggered People Power – thrown in. It was a logical and practical move. She could not afford obstruction in the spadework that needed to be done to solve the country's problems. She had to have men and women she knew and trusted around her. The question of matching expertise to specific tasks at hand had to take a back seat, at first.

President Aquino could have claimed for herself the vast powers of the dictator. She was sworn into office in February 1986 under the Marcos Constitution of 1973 with its infamous Amendment No. 6, which allowed the President to do practically anything. She used it, only to turn it against itself: Proclamation No. 3 on March 25, 1986 abolished the 1973 Constitution and the Batasang Pambansa and established the Freedom Constitution. With this move, President Aquino started the dismantling of the Marcos dictatorship machinery.

Although the Freedom Constitution also gave her a wide latitude of power, President Aquino used it prudently and only to facilitate the immediate task of rehabilitating government. One of her first acts under the Freedom Constitution was to appoint 50 men and women widely representative of the citizenry and of known integrity to a Constitutional Commission. By February 1987, a new Constitution had been overwhelmingly ratified by the people of the Philippines. In May of the same year, the first electoral exercise under the new Constitution was held. The swearing in of the new Congress on July 25, 1987 may have marked the end of President Aquino's emergency powers, but it put the country on the road to genuine democracy.

From day one to the day she turned over the task of governance to her successor, President Aquino adhered to a system of management reflective of the People Power that propelled her into the presidency. Her approach was personal, consultative, and populist.

Streamlining The Bureaucracy

Joker Arroyo, the first Executive Secretary, was appalled at the extent power was centralized in the Office of the President, known as the OP. Aside from hav-

ing numerous attached agencies and institutions, it was vested with approving authority on almost any government activity. "The Office of the President is one big travel agency", he was prompted to say when he found out that all government personnel were required to secure a travel authority from Malacañang. Likewise, all government contracts exceeding P2 million and all negotiated contracts regardless of amount had to be approved by the OP. It was obvious that this concentration of power was one tool used by the dictator in keeping tight control on government.

Thus, one of the first things the Aquino administration did was to rationalize the bureaucracy. While still operating under the Freedom Constitution, President Aquino created the Presidential Commission on Government Reorganization or PCGR. The operative word was decentralization and the primary target was the OP.

As a result of the reorganization, various entities formerly attached to the OP were either abolished, privatized, granted a measure of autonomy, or transferred to the appropriate governmental department. The same was done, on a minor scale, with other line departments except for Imelda Marcos' giant Ministry of Human Settlements which was dismantled.

The reorganization addressed the strategic matter of improving the delivery of frontline services. As the PCGR puts it: "More than anywhere else in the broad spectrum of government functions, activities, and processes, it is in services that the people's judgment of government efficiency is based. It is also here, to a large extent, that a supportive or a critical attitude towards government will be formed. This is because frontline inefficiencies are direct and personal to the affected individual". Proper delivery of frontline services "will result in the solution of other problems major in themselves, thus enabling the establishment of a more productive, more efficient, and more responsive government machinery". And as an aid to promoting bureaucratic efficiency, the Agency Mandate Review (AMR) - a continuing process of policy issues and thrusts evaluation at agency level - was initiated.

It was at this stage that the foundations for the eventual devolution of powers to local government units (LGUs) were laid. Among the immediate reforms was the transfer of the granting of government employees' travel authority to their respective Department Secretaries. The OP approved travel authority only for Department Secretaries, Undersecretaries, and Assistant Secretaries. Department Secretaries were also empowered

to approve bidden infrastructure contracts regardless of amount. The ceiling for securing presidential approval on negotiated contracts was raised to P100 million in the case of the Departments of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and Transportation and Communication (DOTC), and P50 million in the case of the other departments and government corporations.

The process of devolution was pursued by the Aquino administration throughout its term: from the reorganizations, to the Cabinet Decentralization Project in 1988 wherein five provinces were piloted for the decentralization of certain department functions and responsibilities, to the passage of the Local Government Code in 1991 which gave local government units the power of self-determination on local matters.

The President showed her bias for participative democracy by 'sharing much of the authority and responsibility of governance with her Advisers and Department Secretaries. She entrusted the Secretaries with a wide latitude of powers. This grant of powers was evident in the non-interference by the President on the policies and standard operations of Departments.

By streamlining the bureaucracy through devolution and decentralization, President Aquino gave body to the spirit of People Power. But that was only the more visible manifestation of her use of consultative and participative management in the exercise of governance. What follows, in this volume, is a glimpse at the inner workings of the Office of the President under Corazon Aquino, at the end of which, an understanding may be gained of the ways of democratic rule.

The Cabinet Consultation Process

While it is true that President Aquino came into the presidency with little preparation for the job, her situation could not have been much different from any other person who had occupied the post. No training in the world assures unqualified success in such a complicated task as the governance of a nation. But in the early days of her term, President Aquino was patronizingly viewed by her detractors as somebody ignorant of the ways of power and, therefore, not fit to steer the country. Her preference for calling on advisers for guidance, a fact she did not bother to hide, further increased their derision.

Still, she proved to be the wiser one.

President Aquino called on several individuals and advisory bodies, both pri-

vate and governmental, for guidance in the course of her policy making. They were friends and allies and were recognized experts in their respective fields.

The whole exercise of policy making in the Aquino administration employed the Cabinet Consultation Process. It was a tool of management that evolved out of President Aquino's personal management style, commitment to democratic principles, and populist orientation. The Office of the President was the primary user of the process which, nevertheless, encompassed the whole executive department.

The Cabinet

The President as the Chief Executive of the government is tasked with the principal responsibility of managing the developmental concerns of the public. As such, the President exercises direct control over all the departments, commissions, and agencies of the national government and general supervision over the local governments.

In view of the numerous concerns of the presidency and for purposes of efficiency, expediency, and/or coordination, the President is empowered to create executive committees, councils, or

boards to help advise on policy or supervise implementation of policy decisions. One such advisory body is the Cabinet, traditionally the premier brain trust of the Philippine presidency.

The Cabinet is the collegiate body in the executive branch of government which has, by its organizational nature, first-line access to the President. Composed of Secretaries of line departments and various other Secretaries with or without portfolio, it is the executive's primary administrative and policy implementing arm.

But the composition of the Cabinet and its works are at the pleasure of the President. An autocratic presidency may choose not to convene the Cabinet and singlehandedly rule the State. Still another may choose to call on only some of the Cabinet members for help in ministering to the affairs of the Executive. The Aquino presidency, however, chose to manage government in the style of participative democracy – sharing much of the authority and responsibility of governance with the entire Cabinet.

With the pressing situation that President Aquino faced, the role and functions of her Cabinet had never been more pronounced and challenging. Unlike in the dictatorial regime of the past, during

which the Cabinet was hardly consulted in policy and decision making, the Cabinet under President Aquino was the principal adviser. Aside from the Department Secretaries, it included the heads of the National Economic and Development Authority or NEDA and Presidential Management Staff or PMS, the Director General of the National Security Council, the Press Secretary, the Cabinet Secretary, and various other Presidential Advisers and Assistants who were experts on specific areas of concern.

The Cabinet under President Aquino performed three principal functions. First, it served as a coordination and integration mechanism whereby presidential decisions were immediately relayed throughout the government structure for a unified and consistent implementation; second, it served as a venue for the presentation of different opinions and positions on policy issues upon which presidential decisions were based; and third, it served as medium of information exchange and feedback.

In the first years of the Aquino administration, the Cabinet sat as often as once a week to discuss the numerous problems that confronted the nation. During the first meetings, discussions were focused on the state of resources of the government, such as the budget, the

physical assets including aircraft and vehicles, and the general economic situation of the country. Also high in the priority of the Cabinet were the immediate measures that responded to the clamor of the people, like oil price cuts and price controls on prime commodities.

As the Aquino administration gained stronger hold on the affairs of the State, Cabinet meetings became less frequent. Since the consolidation stage had been successfully passed, concentration was increasingly directed at policy implementation which necessitated hands-on involvement of the Secretaries in their respective Departments or assignments.

The Cabinet held a total of 185 meetings in the six years of the Aquino administration. The President chaired almost all the meetings, except for the few times when she had to attend to some other important matters. On such occasions, she opened the meetings and then came back after fulfilling her commitment.

There were times when the Cabinet needed to deliberate on pressing concerns in greater lengths, which were not possible during regular meetings. Thus, Cabinet workshops were organized as the need arose. All in all, there were six such workshops held by the Aquino Cabinet.

Cabinet Workshops held under the Aquino Administration

1. Cabinet Team-Building Workshop
October 10, 1987 – Guesthouse
2. Workshop on the Legislative Agenda for the Executive Branch and the State of the Nation Address
July 16, 1988 – State Dining Room
3. Cabinet Strategic Planning Workshop
August 18, 25, and 26, 1989
4. Cabinet Workshop on Plan Updating
October 13 and 20, 1989
5. Workshop Addressing the National Emergency Situation
June 2, 1990
6. Kabisig Workshop
June 27, 1990

The Executive Secretary:

Among the President's men, the Executive Secretary, also known as the "Little President", is *primus inter pares* – first among equals. He is the President's principal in-house adviser and, by law, authorized to act for and in behalf of the President. Although of equal rank to the other Secretaries, it is only the Executive Secretary who can, "by authority of the President", reverse a decision made by a fellow Secretary.

The title of Executive Secretary was used from the time of President Quezon until 1975 when President Marcos established the Presidential Assistant System

and the position of Executive Secretary became known as Presidential Executive Assistant. In 1986, the old title of Executive Secretary was restored by President Aquino.

The position of Executive Secretary defies definition. Each of those who had occupied this post in the pre-Aquino era – from Jorge Vargas to Amelito Mutuc, Fortunato de Leon, Rafael Salas, Alejandro Melchor, and Ernesto Maceda – had their own interpretation on how to discharge his duties. While the administrative code clearly spells out the role and functions of the Executive Secretary, its character still depended largely on the Chief Executive's management style as

well as the nature of his relationship with the person occupying the position. For this reason, the Executive Secretary's participation in the executive branch may range from that of simply being a pencil-pusher and paper processor to that of consensus-builder and issues manager.

But regardless of the extent of the Executive Secretary's powers as the President allowed, he is widely perceived to be the Chief Executive's alter ego. Very often, he becomes buffer between the President and any unfavorable feedback that may result from some unpopular executive act. It is the Executive Secretary who faces public ire, sparing his boss from unnecessary erosion of public trust.

President Aquino had five Executive Secretaries in the span of her six-year term: Joker Arroyo (February 1986-September 1987), Catalino Macaraig (September 17, 1987-December 14, 1990), Oscar Orbos (December 15, 1990-July 7, 1991), Magdangal Elma (July 8, 1991-July 14, 1991), and Franklin Drilon (July 15, 1991 - June 1992). These frequent changes in Executive Secretaries may be understood in light of the volatile political conditions prevailing during the Aquino years. The country was in a state of transition and numerous destabilizing factors, most serious of which were the attempted coups d'état, were at work.

The President had to change the people in her Cabinet as the situation demanded.

Each of the five Executive Secretaries had distinct personalities and management styles which, nevertheless, proved appropriate to the period in which they served. Arroyo was decisive and fiery – just the type to face the demands of a revolutionary team. Catalino Macaraig was a low-key pencil pusher who unobtrusively pursued the President's agenda with least controversy. Oscar Orbos led a high-profile, people-friendly, PR campaign for the presidency at the height of the Gulf Crisis, while Franklin Drilon was the action man who saw to the implementation of the Aquino administration's thrusts.

The Office of the Executive Secretary is unique, in the sense that it has both line and staff functions. Its staff function pertains to its duties to the President, while its line function pertains to its management of the OP and its attached agencies.

In the OP common staff support, there were bodies that provided technical as well as administrative support to the President and the Cabinet.

The **general government administrative staff** provided support on mat-

ters concerning general government administration relative to the operation of the national government including the provision of legal and administrative services, staff work on political and legislative matters, information and assistance to the general public, and measures towards the resolution of complaints against public officials and employees brought to the attention of the OP. It also assisted the Executive Secretary in the review of the various presidential issuances – Executive Orders, Proclamations, Memorandum Orders, Administrative Orders – submitted to and emanating from the OP.

The **Cabinet Secretariat**, headed by a Cabinet Secretary, was the support body concerned with all Cabinet needs – from agenda setting to materials preparation and/or collation, records keeping, information dissemination of Cabinet decisions and actions to concerned departments/agencies/entities, interdepartmental coordination on the implementation of executive actions and decisions, and all other functions and powers as directed by the President. The Cabinet Secretariat also served about 16 permanent committees in addition to a number of ad hoc committees and interagency working groups. In order to adequately respond to the demands of these functions, three major units were created: the

Technical Affairs Staff, the Conference Affairs Staff, and the Administrative Support Staff. In view of all its duties and responsibilities, the Cabinet Secretariat, therefore, was the support body most closely involved in the Cabinet Consultation Process.

The Cabinet Consultation Process as well as the various systems instituted in support of it by the then Cabinet Secretariat could well be said to be the main factor why there was stability in executive department operations despite the numerous Cabinet changes in the Aquino administration. The dynamic impetus for governmental reforms was sustained because systems and procedures had been well laid out.

The Cabinet Secretariat under the Aquino administration developed beyond the supra-clerical body it used to be into a strategic office central to the policy-making functions of the OP. To begin with, the Cabinet Secretary was given the rank and emolument of a member of the Cabinet.

Most of the management systems employed by the executive office had their origins in the Cabinet Secretariat. This evolution of the Cabinet Secretariat is understandable when viewed in the context of the Aquino style of leadership. She was consultative, a consensus-builder, and

very determined to pursue the reforms her policies had set. Such qualities needed an efficient staff support and system directly linked to her closest advisory body, the Cabinet.

The **Presidential Management Staff** or PMS, on the other hand, is the support body in the OP responsible for the management of the national development process. It administered various OP funds and conceptualized special projects for the OP. From the PMS came the technical staff support necessary for the implementation of presidential initiatives and projects.

In January 1991, during the incumbency of Executive Secretary Oscar Orbos, the Cabinet Secretariat was absorbed by the PMS.

The Cabinet Clusters:

In 1987, at the time when the Cabinet had just undergone a reorganization due to the resignations of some members who ran in the national elections, the President felt the need for tighter interfacing among Cabinet members on related concerns. She instructed then Cabinet Secretary Jose de Jesus to devise a system that would address this need.

Cabinet Secretary de Jesus came up with the Cabinet Cluster System which

involved the grouping of the Cabinet into clusters whose members had common or complementary concerns. When the system was first implemented, it was composed of three clusters: Cluster A or the Economic Development Cluster, Cluster B or the Sociocultural Development Cluster, and Cluster C or the General Government Cluster.

With the ultimate objective of improving delivery of services and ensuring efficiency in its pursuit, the Cabinet Cluster System had the following operational goals: 1) to serve as advisory committees of the President and the Cabinet by recommending measures on policy and operational matters for their consideration; 2) to identify problems that constrain effective delivery of frontline services, and formulate and coordinate the implementation of strategies addressing these problems; 3) to assist in the formulation and review of legislative matters; and 4) to provide opportunities for reflection and brainstorming on government direction.

The Clusters proved to be effective venues for discussion of interdepartmental positions and threshing out conflicts. Joint meetings of concerned Clusters were also held in cases where the issues to be resolved cut across sectors.

There were times, however, when the expected bias of a Secretary for his or her constituency prevented successful resolutions in the Clusters. The existence of other fora which addressed similar concerns and which had the same member-agencies as the Clusters also lessened the effectivity of the system. These situations were addressed through direct presidential intervention and through the rationalization of certain Clusters.

Consistent with her personal approach to management, President Aquino even held one-on-one sessions with Cluster heads when some vital matters had to be resolved.

The Clusters were later reconstituted into five groups in order to narrow focus on its areas of concern. The Economic Development Cluster was divided into Rural Development (Cluster A), Industrial Development (Cluster B), and Economic Development (Cluster D). The Sociocultural Cluster became Cluster C, while the General Government Cluster was refocused and renamed Security and Political Development (Cluster E).

Clusters were deactivated as the need for interfacing in certain areas lessened, except for Cluster E, since issues concerning Security and Political Development

remained critical throughout President Aquino's term.

The Cabinet Assistance System:

In order to manage the time of the Cabinet better, the Cabinet Assistance System (CAS) was established in 1987. A unique innovation of the Aquino presidency, it was essentially a technical and recommendatory clearinghouse for the Cabinet. Composed of Undersecretaries designated by their Department heads, it generated agenda for Cabinet meetings, helped facilitate the implementation and monitoring of presidential decisions, and resolved interdepartment policy conflicts, elevating to the Cabinet only the unresolved ones.

The CAS had its roots in 1986 when then Deputy Executive Secretary Fulgencio Factoran conceptualized the creation of a body that would help facilitate efficient and effective Cabinet discussions. As Secretary Factoran puts it: "During the very early days of this administration, when government was running exclusively on good intentions.....there was clearly a need to clean up our act during Cabinet meetings. Discussions were not substantive enough, as the members of the Cabinet were not efficiently prepared and updated on the matters at hand. Oftentimes, discussions

became mired in the details which should have been cleared beforehand.....It was clear that more preparations were needed to be done". Thus, on November 27, 1986, he convened a group of representatives from various departments at the Philippine Columbian to flesh out the concept. What resulted was a system composed of Cabinet Assistants who helped plan and prepare the Cabinet agenda ahead of time, briefed their respective Department heads on matters in the agenda before the meeting, and assisted in the implementation of Cabinet decisions in their respective departments.

On December 1, 1986, Fulgencio Factoran was designated Cabinet Secretary and proceeded to informally operate the system. In June 1987, the CAS was officially constituted through Memorandum Order No. 96. The Cabinet Secretary was designated as its Chairman.

As the CAS' contribution to the President's and the Cabinet members' decision-making process became more pronounced, additional functions were handed to the CAS. On top of its responsibility in facilitating Cabinet discussions, it was given the function of formulating the legislative agenda whereby it reviewed and prioritized all the bills endorsed to the OP or those that were to be

certified as administration or urgent bills. The President's confidence in the CAS was such that during Cabinet discussions on certain legislative measures, she would ask: "Has the CAS reviewed this?"

The rapport that developed between a Cabinet member and his Cabinet Assistant was critical in the achievement of an effective Cabinet Consultation Process. Some of the more successful partnerships were those of Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon and Undersecretary Mario Taguiwalo, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Mita Pardo de Tavera and Undersecretary Cora de Leon, Science and Technology Secretary Ceferino Follusco and Assistant Secretary Amelia Ancog, Public Works and Highways Secretary Fiorello Estuar and Undersecretary Teodoro Encarnacion, Transportation and Communications Secretary Reinerio Reyes and Undersecretary Josefina Lichauco, and Education Secretary Lourdes Quisumbing and Undersecretary Victor Ordoñez.

Rapport among the Cabinet Assistants also developed to such an extent that it contributed greatly to interdepartment cooperation in the implementation of policy decisions. Moreover, the open-line access to the OP that the CAS encouraged updated the Cabinet Assistants on latest policy developments and helped

them gain a wider perspective of their departments' roles in the policy thrusts. This up-down and lateral interaction made for a cohesive implementing arm of the Cabinet.

In December 1989, the Aquino administration's thrust shifted from policy review and formulation to aggressive implementation of priority programs and projects. The CAS accordingly shifted its focus from policy orientation to policy operationalization which resulted in the Cabinet Assistants' increased involvement in their respective Departments. Subsequently, the CAS was abolished by EO 446 which reorganized the OP.

The Cabinet Officers for Regional Development:

Overcentralized decision making at the national level had caused a chain reaction of serious institutional paralysis at the regional and local levels and delayed efficient public services delivery over the past decades. Thus, sometime in late 1987, a select group of Cabinet members and other specialists in government held a series of discussions at the Development Academy of the Philippines to find a mechanism that would resolve the situation. Then Cabinet Secretary de Jesus convened these meetings.

Before the end of 1987, a consensus was reached to propose a concept of assigning a Cabinet member to be responsible for a region. To be called Cabinet Officers for Regional Development or CORDs, they would serve as the representative of the President and act on matters requiring the national government's attention.

Further discussions were held in early 1988 wherein some Cabinet members and government officials objected to the concept. Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon opposed it on the ground that the additional task would eat up significant executive time and, therefore, diminish their effectivity as heads of their respective departments. Some NEDA officials thought that it ran contrary to the government policy of decentralization and local autonomy. Further consultations, however, produced a well-defined and limited role for the CORDs that would not contradict other objectives of development administration.

It was agreed that each CORD would coordinate with various agencies and local government units to facilitate decisions or responses from the national level. Despite initial reservations, merit was found in the idea of the CORD, being in effect the President's extensions in the field, as one direct bottom-to-top linkage.

Administrative Order No. 55, signed on February 9, 1988, created the CORD System. The NEDA Regional Offices provided technical support to CORD regional visits, while the Special Concerns Staff of the Office of the Cabinet Secretary served as the overall secretariat at the national level.

Whenever possible, Cabinet members were assigned to the regions where they came from. The exception was the Secretary of Public Works and Highways who was not assigned to any region since he was, of course, the most sought-after department head by local officials.

The CORD system became a timely innovation in the Aquino administration as it was activated at a period when President Aquino and her Cabinet were being accused of hiding in their Malacañang ivory tower. In many instances, the CORD was successful in bringing the Executive down to the grass-roots. For instance, the CORDs helped local government units prepare their feasibility studies which facilitated their official development assistance.

The CORD system also provided valuable feedback mechanism. By being there, the CORDs got firsthand information on the effectivity of government in their areas of assignment. Direct benefi-

ciaries of such feedback were the National Reconciliation and Development Program (NRDP) on the peace process, the Local Communities Assistance Program (LCAP), and the Pilot Decentralization Program.

The success of the CORD system varied depending on the interest and capability of the CORDs in carrying out their responsibilities. Trade and Industry Secretary Jose Concepcion Jr. devoted a lot of time and talent as CORD for Region IV. This region became the most progressive alternative industrial site outside of Metro Manila. Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, who served in Western Mindanao or Region IX, proved that the promotion of security required not only military but mainly economic solutions. He coordinated activities which ranged from the continuing program for Special Development Areas to launching "floating health centers" in coordination with the Department of Health.

Other Presidential Advisory And Consultative Bodies

Apart from the Cabinet, the President also consulted with other advisory bodies constituted to tackle specific concerns that were either urgent or of strategic importance.

NEDA Board:

The NEDA Board is the independent planning agency of government primarily responsible for formulating, coordinating, and integrating social and economic policies, plans, and programs towards the achievement of growth and development. It is composed of the President as Chairman and selected Department heads as members. The NEDA Board meets regularly once a month or as frequently as necessary to discharge its functions and responsibilities.

Joint Legislative-Executive Foreign Debt Council:

The persisting issue surrounding the management of foreign debts necessitated the establishment of a forum in which positions of various sectors were considered in formulating the strategies and approaches to the foreign debt problem. Thus, the Aquino administration formed the Joint Legislative-Executive Foreign Debt Council or JLEFDC.

In order to fulfill its task of providing a venue for evaluating the foreign debt problem, the JLEFDC undertook in-depth and continuing studies on the issue, its impact on national development, and the possible policy options and strategies. The JLEFDC was also tasked with

enhancing coordination between the legislative and executive branches of government and with facilitating nationwide consultations and public hearings.

Council of State:

Through Executive Order No. 305 dated September 9, 1987, the President created the Council of State for the purpose of receiving reliable information and competent advice on pressing problems and issues of national interest. In this regard, except for some permanent members like the President, the Vice President, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, the Executive Secretary, the Secretary of National Defense and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the composition of the Council varies according to the matter on hand. Membership is flexible in that it is not limited to government; persons from the private sector are also considered. Furthermore, based on presidential directive, invitations are open to those who held opposing views and orientation.

The President convened the Council of State twice during her term. The first time, on September 10, 1987, was to discuss the peace and order situation, particularly the civilian and military relationship, communication problems, industrial peace, and the alleviation of

poverty. The second time was on September 6, 1991, to gather views on the proposed RP-US Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security which was facing imminent rejection from the Senate. The administration, citing reasons of domestic political and economic stability as well as regional and global unity, was pushing for ratification.

*Coordinating Council for the
Philippine Assistance Program:*

The growing need for more financial assistance to achieve objectives of sustainable economic growth became pronounced in late 1988. The Multilateral Aid Initiative (MAI) program of the United States and various other financial support from other developed countries had already been coming in, but concern over its slow utilization rate was raised by the donors, particularly the United States and Japan.

Thus, the Task Force on the Philippine Aid Plan was created in order to fast track the mobilization and utilization of this support from the international community, also known collectively as Official Development Assistance (ODA). The Task Force, chaired by the Executive Secretary and composed of selected members of the Cabinet, was later reconstituted into the Coordinating Council for

the Philippine Assistance Program (CCPAP). Significantly, the reconstituted CCPAP included representatives from both Houses of Congress and the private sector.

Presidential Agrarian Reform Council:

The Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) coordinated and maintained the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), a major social justice program. It was chaired by the President and co-chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). Its members included the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), Department of Budget Management (DBM), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and the National Irrigation Administration.

The Legislative Agenda Formulation Process

After giving up her sole law-making powers through the 1987 elections, President Aquino turned her attention on the present need for executive-legislative li-

aision that would ensure passage of her legislative agenda. Thus, in the August 12, 1987 Cabinet meeting, the President approved the Legislative Agenda Formulation Process.

The salient points of the process adopted were as follow: 1) Cabinet members were asked to submit proposed legislations to the Office of the President; 2) the Cabinet Secretariat created a master list and a computerized databank containing key information on the proposed legislation; and 3) the CAS plenary reviewed the recommendations of the CAS Committees and prepared a list of priority bills to be submitted to the President and the Cabinet.

The criteria for selecting priority bills to be included in the President's legislative agenda were the following: 1) these must address the problems either of insurgency/peace and order, poverty and inequality, energizing the bureaucracy and improving the delivery of services, graft and corruption, and asserting civilian supremacy over the military; 2) these must be consistent with the relevant provisions of the Constitution; 3) these must promote or operationalize the objectives of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan; 4) these must be filed within the next three to six months; and 5) these must be ready to be presented to

the Cabinet in the form of draft bills after concerned agencies had been consulted.

The Legislative Liaison System

In the Cabinet meeting of October 5, 1988, the President approved the creation of the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office-Legislative Liaison System (PLLO-LLS). Each department was directed to designate a legislative liaison officer, preferably with a rank not lower than Assistant Secretary, who was called Department Legislative Liaison Officer or DLLO. The work of the DLLOs included promoting passage of bills in the President's Agenda, facilitating the requests of the legislators, and attending hearings of legislative committees. The President designated Flerida Ruth Romero and Jesus V. Ayala as Malacañang liaison officers to the Senate and the House of Representatives, respectively.

The Department liaison officers, however, campaigned not only for the common minimum legislative agenda but for other administrative bills which required the immediate attention of Congress to complement the programs and projects of the executive branch. These bills included those for the imposition of sin taxes, the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Pro-

gram or CARP, and the establishment of provincial centers for science and technology in all provinces of the Philippines.

Besides pushing the legislative agenda of the President, the PLLO-LLS also studied the substance and monitored the status of some 35,407 bills, 2,501 resolutions, and 70 concurrent resolutions filed in the House of Representatives and did likewise to some 1,960 bills, 1,342 resolutions, and 61 concurrent resolutions in the Senate. Of these myriad legislative propositions, the PLLO-LLS identified the "innocuous", the "friendly", and the "unfriendly" ones on the basis of relevance and timeliness for appropriate action. By way of directly and indirectly providing the necessary technical expertise and critical linkages with the concerned executive departments, the PLLO-LLS assisted in the passage of 112 bills of national application and 589 bills of local application initiated by members of Congress.

Worth noting were the areas of conflict in the executive-legislative relationship. For instance, requests for the release of budgetary appropriations for numerous local projects emanating from Congress, such as infrastructure programs, gave rise to some animosity. But despite this, the President never wavered in pursuing the realization of these ini-

tiatives. Happily, the PLLO-LLS creatively devised a system to evaluate the viability and validity of individual requests and effectively match each project to the development programs of the President. While such projects admittedly tended to provide their respective sponsor-legislators some concrete political mileage, the accessibility of the executive line department via the PLLO-LLS had been strongly perceived as indicative of the President's support. Hence, local bills were enacted to generate the greatest impact on the image of the Presidency.

Conversely, a pro-active approach was adopted by the DLLOs in blocking the passage of legislative measures that had adverse effects on programs of government. Using diplomacy rooted in personal rapport with the power centers of Congress and in established network with the Secretariat, the PLLOs-LLS prevented the advance to plenary consideration of the dreaded reorganization of the whole bureaucracy via a repeal of Executive Order No. 292, otherwise known as the Administrative Code of 1987. Thousands of civil servants would have been thrown into total disarray had the scheme pushed through; said final report of the House Committee on Reorganization was "killed" at the committee level.

On several occasions, the PLLO-LLS spearheaded task forces to draw consensus among agencies that would be affected by the passage of certain legislations. Where the formulated concerted stand ran counter to the intention of the proposed measure, plans were mapped out and efforts were consolidated for effective opposition.

To generate support for the presidential appointees during the public hearings by the Commission on Appointments, the PLLO-LLS explored all the available venues and conferred with any and all within the spheres of power and influence for expediency. In the same manner, to quell opposition and convert the same into support for the position taken by the President on certain issues, one-on-one approach was adopted and a head count was actually made as in the cases of: the ratification of the RP-US Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Security; the foiled attempt to unseat the Speaker of the House of Representatives; attempt to override the presidential veto regarding certain items in the 1992 General Appropriations Act such as suspension of payment on loan contracted for the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant; and when the President requested for emergency powers in the aftermath of the defeated 1989 rebellion. Lobbying, in those instances, involved shuttling

between Malacañang and Congress for point-by-point reassessment of position.

In the face of irreconcilable differences with Congress, the position of the President or of the executive branch was reinforced in press releases and bolstered by support from opinion leaders to lessen the impact of public acquiescence to the decision of Congress. However, when the position taken by the President or the executive branch can not be subjected to any compromise because the proposed law would have undermined the integrity of the presidency or may have led to administrative havoc in the bureaucracy, a veto was recommended. To date, the President had vetoed 15 bills of national application and eight bills of local application. The PLLO-LLS undertook the necessary steps as it acted as a buffer following transmittal of the President's veto messages to Congress.

Presidential Meetings With Leaders Of Congress

The responsibility of liaising with Congress, however, was not entirely delegated to the Legislative Liaison System. The President herself was actively involved in promoting a harmonious and effective working relationship with Congress. The President led the workshops with her Cabinet in the formulation of a

legislative agenda for the Executive branch. After the workshops, she would assign the Cabinet Secretariat to convene a Technical Working Group which would include the Chief-of-Staff of the Armed Forces, the Senate President, the Speaker of the House, the Majority Floor Leaders of both Houses and other key technical people in the legislative branch. The

output of the Technical Working Group was a proposed common minimum legislative agenda.

After the technical groundwork had been laid, the President would invite the leaders of both Houses of Congress to a meeting to generate support for the proposed common minimum legislative agenda.

Convergence of Executive Minds

The first half of the Aquino administration was a period for policy setting and agenda prioritization. To attend to this concern, the President and the Cabinet held frequent meetings and consultations. Cabinet plenary meetings were held twice a month, while both the CORD and the NEDA Board met once a month. The monthly calendar of the President and the Cabinet, thus, went as follows: Cabinet plenary meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of the month; CORD meeting on the second Wednesday; and NEDA Board meeting on the last Wednesday of the month. The

President presided over the meetings of these three fora.

Later on, the creation of several specialized bodies and fora streamlined discussions at Cabinet *en banc* and provided for more effective venues for focused discussions of national issues and concerns. For instance, before convening a Cabinet plenary meeting to discuss issues concerning peace and security, Cabinet Cluster E may first take up the matter at level. If an issue concerns regional operations, then, most likely, the CORD is convened instead of the Cabinet *en banc*.

Until the middle of 1990, Cabinet meetings, including those of the CORD and the NEDA Board, were held in the morning, beginning at 9:30. Henceforth, it was moved to an afternoon schedule starting at 4:00 o'clock. The change in schedule was brought about by a clamor among Cabinet members that a morning schedule left them harrassed and rushing to their succeeding appointments for the day.

Meetings presided over by the President started promptly. The official family was aware of the President's penchant for promptness, thus, it rarely happened that anyone came late for her meetings.

For the Cabinet *en banc*, the CORD, and the NEDA Board, a session for interagency consultation was provided 30 minutes before the start of the formal meeting. Although this session was informal, it had proven to be an effective forum for group or one-on-one huddle among Cabinet members. Topics discussed varied from the morning's headlines and immediate events, such as one's guesting on a television talk show, to perennial concerns and problems, such as strikes, traffic, flood, potholes, and black-outs. But more than the usual exchange of stories and pleasantries, this period was utilized by some Cabinet members

to make follow-ups, finalize agreements, discuss compromises, present proposals, lobby for one's position, settle issues, and resolve interdepartmental conflicts. Executive Secretary Franklin Drilon, Public Works and Highways Secretary de Jesus, Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Factoran, Agriculture Secretary Dominguez, Science and Technology Secretary Follusco, Health Secretary Bengzon, and Social and Economic Planning Secretary Monsod had made good use of such sessions.

Since the President started a tradition of saying a prayer before calling her meetings to order, Cabinet members took turns in leading the prayers, which requested for God's grace and wisdom as the President and the Cabinet endeavored to address the concerns of the country and the populace.

The meetings proceeded with the review of the conclusions of the previous meeting. A long pause usually accompanied this review. On the side, the minutes officer would quietly sit waiting for the body to approve the minutes.

The major part of the meeting was spent discussing the main agenda items. On the average, meetings took up three major items. The President introduced the presenter who was given 15 minutes

to make his presentation. The best presentations were always saved for the President and the Cabinet. Meticulous preparations were undertaken to come up with the most impressive props and visual aids.

The first storyboard presentation was made by Secretary de Jesus on his report to the Cabinet in August 1987 on the Accomplishments of the Presidential Committee on Public Ethics and Accountability (PCPEA). The presentation made a very good impression that the technology had since become a favorite during Cabinet presentations.

How did Cabinet members prepare themselves for their presentation? Former Budget Secretary Gem Carague, for instance, made sure that he rehearsed his presentation a day before his schedule. Secretary Factoran was known to be very meticulous and personally saw through the details in preparing his presentation. Secretary Fidel Ramos, on the other hand, could competently prepare for a presentation complete with sophisticated props even with a 24-hour notice. At one time, Social Welfare Secretary Mita Pardo de Tavera, during the presentation of the Agency Thrust and Policy Issues of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), distributed packages of the Department's

Ready-to-Eat Food for disaster victims. The Cabinet members partook of the food packages which consisted of beans, rice, and sausages. The President and the Cabinet members applauded the departments for innovations in presentations.

The tone of cabinet meetings were usually determined by the issues being discussed. Arguments and deliberations varied from being spirited, to intense, emotional, passionate, and serious. By and large, arguments were honest attempts to arrive at sound decisions.

The President encouraged debates and discussions. The consensus builder that she is, she allowed issues to be debated before she rendered her decisions. Sharing her views about the tedious process of review that preceded the issuance of the Executive Order on the Agrarian Reform Program, the President capsulized her thoughts on the matter: "I do not mind getting the flak for my decisions as long as I am convinced and confident that it is the answer. Your job, therefore, is to convince me".

Building A Consensus

Differences in opinion, beliefs, and principles were often the cause of heated arguments and emotional discussions during meetings.

One source of argument at the Cabinet was the tendency of a member to be biased towards one's turf and constituents. A Cabinet member's position was always to look at a proposal or course of action in terms of its impact to one's department or sector. "Conflict of interest" was evident between the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) over the proposed industrial estates and the small entrepreneurial thrust of Kalakalan 20; DOLE and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) over the deployment of domestic helpers abroad; National Power Corporation (NPC) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) over the operation of the Calaca Coal Plant.

At worst, differences in policies and opinions affected the relationship of Cabinet members, as in the case of two Secretaries whose irreconcilable differences over population policy and family planning resulted to their estrangement. Needless to say, the population issue was perhaps the most emotionally charged issue the Cabinet had ever discussed.

But what was it about population that made it such a controversial item? The basic argument was founded on the fundamental issue of whether or not the

government should adopt a more aggressive position as regards population control considering the 2.5 percent population growth rate of the Philippines, or continue with the current policy anchored on responsible parenthood. Until now, there remains an impasse in government decision on this issue.

The Cabinet also argued a lot on proposals which required funding. Having inherited a bankrupt economy, resources were scarce and priorities had to be clearly defined. As a rule, a proponent agency or department was expected to be able to identify possible alternative sources of funding for its program. An example of this was the creative approval adopted by the DECS because of financial constraints. Schemes such as subcontracting with private schools and adopting three shift classes were resorted to in the implementation of the Free Secondary Education Program of government.

The implications and inconsistencies of specific proposals to major policies of government were also a source of argument among the Cabinet members. For instance, it was difficult to get the approval of the President and the Cabinet on proposals that called for the creation of new agencies or offices as these ran counter to the government policy of trim-

ming and streamlining the bureaucracy. As an example, despite the endorsement by the CAS, the President and the Cabinet rejected the proposal to create a Department of Housing and Urban Development. While it agreed on the basic principles of the housing and urban development program, the Cabinet's decision was to leave the determination on the program's implementing mechanism to Congress.

Similarly, the proposal to expand the functions of, and increase the budget of, the DSWD so that it could take on the role of a lead agency on the poverty alleviation efforts of the government was rejected by the Cabinet.

Mainly because of the President's style in facilitating and moderating her meetings, everybody was free to present an opinion or position. The President based her decisions on the issues raised, arguments presented, and recommendations made in the meeting. While there were no written rules, once decisions were made and agreed upon, everybody was bound to abide by them.

The President also kept her official family abreast of events and developments involving the presidency so that they were updated and "spoke with one voice".

A Motley Of Personalities

Cabinet members came and went but they left behind an interesting mosaic of a Cabinet made up of diverse and varying personalities.

The first two years of the Aquino administration saw her Cabinet discussing policy issues aimed at laying down the grounds for the administration's agenda. The early days of the Aquino administration saw a group of Cabinet members who, on the basis of their respective principles and opinions, could be classified as follows: the "liberal thinkers" which included the likes of Secretaries Joker Arroyo, Bobbit Sanchez, Rene Saguisag, and Solita Monsod; the "conservative thinkers" which included Secretaries Jose Concepcion, Fidel Ramos, Mita Pardo de Tavera, and Jaime Ongpin; and, finally, the "pragmatists" which included Secretaries Alran Bengzon, Ping de Jesus, and Fulgencio Factoran.

Sharp differences of opinion on fundamental issues such as the release of political prisoners, profit sharing, population policy, and foreign debt and debt servicing, brought about a lot of drama and heavy discussion during the first years of the Cabinet.

On her fourth year as President, however, confident that her administration

had already firmed up its policies and priorities, President Aquino declared that the remaining two years of her term should be devoted to the implementation of action-oriented interventions. At this time, there had been a notable change in the composition of the President's Cabinet. Following several revamps and reorganization, the President's primary consideration in her choice of a Cabinet member was clearly partial to one objective: Will this official support my agenda?

Around this time, too, Cabinet discussions were no longer focused on fundamental and structural policy issues. The concerns had shifted to procedural issues, particularly those directed at program implementation. To effectively address this thrust, the Cabinet Consultation Process underwent some changes that included the reduction in the number of meetings and consultations as well as the deactivation of some bodies and fora, such as the Cabinet Clusters and the CAS to provide the department officials more time to attend to their specific agency concerns.

Ultimately, it could be said that the diversity and mixture of her chief advisers worked favorably for the President in that she was able to draw varied, though sometimes conflicting points of

view. With their various perspectives on specific issues, the President was provided with a wide array of options, richness of knowledge, and depth of analyses on a given issue.

During the CAS Workshop on Poverty Alleviation held in September 1989, DOTC Undersecretary Romeo de Vera raised an issue regarding the objectives of the workshop which was to plan out a specific program that will directly address the concerns of the bottom 30 percent of the population, or what is referred to as the "poorest of the poor". He argued that if the administration was sincere in its effort to address the issue of poverty, then it had to seriously look at the root cause of the problem. A necessary intervention, therefore, was to undertake a review of government policies which were biased against the poor. His position was premised on the fact that unless policy issues were first addressed, then poverty programs and projects were nothing more than stop-gap measures and surface interventions.

Serious arguments ensued and pushed its way until dinner. By the time the next session began, a compromise was reached: the workshop noted the need to address the macro policies affecting poverty as a separate but necessary track towards the country's efforts on poverty alleviation.

Managing The Cabinet Consultation Process

Managing and facilitating the Cabinet Consultation Process is no mean job. Being the highest level of policy review and decision making, there is no room for error. The goal is to ensure that the President and the Cabinet are provided with high quality and timely assistance and services, primary concerns of the Cabinet Secretary.

The Aquino administration had three able and competent Cabinet Secretaries in the person of Secretary Fulgencio Factoran (December 1986 to April 1987), Secretary Jose de Jesus (April 1987 to January 1990), and Secretary Aniceto Sobrepeña (from January 1990 to January 1991, then August 1991 to June 1992).

Secretary Factoran had a short stint but he was instrumental in providing the ground work for a systematic, organized, and orderly Cabinet Consultation Process. Specifically, he was responsible for setting up the CAS and the Cabinet Clusters.

Under the direction of Secretary de Jesus, more systems and procedures were introduced – such as the CORD, CORD-RDC, Cabinet Action Committee

for Implementation Assistance (CACIA), Problem Solving Session with the President – to facilitate consultations within the Cabinet. The CAS Standing Committees were created and the Cabinet Clusters were reconstituted to respond to the challenges of the times.

Secretary Sobrepeña's service to the Cabinet Consultation Process spanned five years, first as Cabinet Undersecretary to Secretary de Jesus from April 1987 to January 1990, then as Cabinet Secretary from January 1990 until June of 1992.

To be able to provide the best services for the President and the Cabinet, the team of Secretary de Jesus and Secretary Sobrepeña embarked on the reorganization of the Cabinet Secretariat with the sole objective of making it an effective support staff of the highest policy advisory body of government. Together, they introduced initiatives to substantiate the works of the Cabinet and its support mechanisms. Among these was the Conference Management Technology.

The Conference Management Technology

The Conference Management Technology included Standard Operating

Procedures (SOPs) for the management of the meetings of the Cabinet and its support mechanisms. The SOPs detailed the rules and procedures in staging meetings and conferences. It included guidelines for the various activities relative to the major stages of preparations for meetings such as preconference, actual conference, and postconference activities.

Part of conference management was the preparation of important papers and documents to facilitate discussions at the meeting. Aside from the briefs, discussion papers, and postmeeting documentations, the Cabinet Secretariat prepared a document called *discussion flow*. A *discussion flow* was a guide or an aid for the chairperson on the conduct of meetings. It aimed to effect a better management of the meeting by providing the chairperson with the guide on the sequence of activities, the topics to be discussed, and the issues and decision areas being required. In other words, it defined and prioritized the discussions to maximize deliberations on the agenda topic.

For the President, the *discussion flow* provided her with information on the agenda items to be discussed and alerted her on contentious issues and the agencies responsible as well as the necessary decisions that may be undertaken.

The Conference Management Technology likewise provided for a component called Experience Learning Application (ELA). Immediately after a meeting, concerned staff reflected on what happened during the meeting. The following questions were asked:

- o Were the objectives of the meeting achieved?
- o What unexpected events happened that should not have happened?
- o What went beautifully right?

The objective of this "postmortem" exercise was to review positive aspects of the meeting, determine what could be learned from it, analyze what went wrong, and evolve measures to prevent it from happening again.

Complementary initiatives were also provided along the following areas:

- o Agenda Planning and Forecasting

The Cabinet Secretariat developed a system for planning and preparing the agenda of the Cabinet and its support mechanisms, such as the Cabinet Clusters, the CORD, the CAS, and the CAS

Committees. This was the agenda forecast which was essentially a schedule of issues and concerns that needed to be taken up at the Cabinet Consultation Process within a specified period of time.

The agenda forecast included day-to-day issues such as those referred by various departments, urgent and pressing issues, and instructions from the President. It also included issues, problems, and events identified by the Cabinet Secretariat in anticipation of forthcoming events. For instance, in preparation for the opening of schools in June, an action plan to address concerns that were most likely to occur during this period should be in the February calendar of the Cabinet Process. Around this time, too, the Cabinet should have been discussing the preparations for the Labor Day celebration.

Included likewise were updates on the status of major programs and projects. This included the monitoring of the status of landmark programs, such as the CARP, the Program to Refocus Orientation for the Poor (PRO-POOR), the Local Government Code, Agency Performance Review, and Improvement in the Delivery of Frontline Services.

To ensure that the agenda of the Cabinet and its support mechanisms

were relevant and timely, the Cabinet Secretariat adopted an issue monitoring system which involved the tracking of issues raised by media and the various sectors; instructions and pronouncements of the President; and current critical events. These were also fed into the agenda forecast.

o Agreements Monitoring

To make sure that agreements reached at the various fora of the Cabinet consultation process were implemented, these were entered into the agreements monitoring databank devised by the Cabinet Secretariat. These included status of each agreement, particularly the ones which required regular monitoring and updating.

o Action Summary

To facilitate quick action on decisions reached at the meetings, the Cabinet Secretariat released an action summary highlighting the major decisions, agreements, and instructions at a meeting. It was released to the members within 36 hours after each meeting.

Several systems and procedures were also introduced to enhance the work of the Cabinet and its support mechanisms.

A Cabinet fax network was set up in 1989 to expedite the transmission and exchange of documents between and among the various departments.

Moreover, communication facilities, such as the use of a two-way radio was initiated so that Cabinet members could exchange faster and quicker.

Relatedly, the Cabinet Communication Network (CNN) was established to promote cooperation and interdepartmental liaisoning among the staff of Cabinet members who were directly involved in Cabinet matters.

The degree of success of a meeting depended, to a great extent, on the preparations done. Preparing for meetings involved a hundred and one details, from the scheduling of meetings to the preparation of discussion papers to the packaging of folders and the calling of meeting attendees.

Aside from the Cabinet, the Cabinet Secretariat served about 16 permanent committees in addition to a number of ad hoc committees and interagency working groups for the period 1986 to 1992.

"A lean and mean staff" was the policy set forth by the two Cabinet Sec-

retaries. The Cabinet Secretariat sailed off with barely 20 staff members in the middle of 1986. The technology available was limited to a computer and a printer.

As of 1990, 25 staff members were effectively involved in the Cabinet Consultation Process both undertaking technical, administrative, and secretariat services. More computers were acquired to facilitate and enhance the work of the staff. In addition, the Cabinet Secretariat installed a Local Area Network (LAN) System to improve data and information sharing within the Cabinet Secretariat and thereby expedite the work and activities of the staff.

To ensure and maintain a competent staff, the Cabinet Secretariat conducted regular staff development workshops and trainings to improve on skills, as well as team-building seminars to promote interpersonal relations.

Moreover, the Cabinet Secretariat also conducted immersion activities to provide the staff with opportunities to relate to the social milieu and immerse themselves in the life and culture of the presidency's clientele, such as the fisherfolk, farmers, artisans, craftsmen, and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The success and effectiveness of a system is based on an interplay of various factors. The systems and mechanisms continue to evolve and adjust to challenges, learning and improving each time. The fact that these are available not only get things done or decided, but most importantly, they provide the fora for the full discussion and debate of the issues.

Presidential Initiatives

The Aquino presidency adhered to certain fundamental imperatives that guided its conduct of public administration. These imperatives were commitment to social justice through poverty alleviation and better administration of justice; and through transparency, restoration of public trust and confidence in government.

To ensure that these fundamental imperatives were achieved at the earliest possible time, the Aquino administration attended to certain management con-

cerns to improve the level of efficiency in public service delivery.

In operational terms, the basic management objectives pursued by the Aquino presidency were the adoption of better project management practices and the clear definition of policy agenda and presidential priorities. The first was addressed through such measures as problem-solving sessions on specific projects at various levels of the government as well as the launching of a comprehensive program to institutionalize a more streamlined bureaucracy. The sec-

ond was met by setting an agenda for governmental machinery to address the basic problem of inequality.

Enhancing Governmental Management

The Committee On Energizing The Bureaucracy

For a more systematic, comprehensive, and continuing improvement of the government bureaucracy, a set of activities to energize it was launched in 1988. The main proponent of these was the Committee on Energizing the Bureaucracy (CEB) which was created under the CAS as a standing Committee. Health Undersecretary Taguiwalo served as Chairman of the Committee.

The primary objective of the CEB was to ensure consistent attention and focus on matters pertaining to the bureaucracy and recommend appropriate doable steps to address existing gaps in policies and programs.

Undersecretary Taguiwalo states in his paper entitled "Wielding the Bureaucracy" presented to the Cabinet Strategic Planning Workshop in 1988: "The goal is that at some point ahead, we shall have a civil service organization that demands

and elicits from each civil servant the full creative expression of individual freedom and responsibility for attaining national goals, while each civil servant responds in kind by assuming personal responsibility for his own performance as well as for his organization's performance". The article continues, "We look for the day when each civil servant becomes true to himself only when he is true to this task, when each individual civil servant embodies the goals, ideals and vision of his organization".

The Technical Affairs Staff of the Cabinet Secretariat served as the secretariat to the CEB by developing and preparing the framework for the CEB work program.

One of the projects implemented by the CEB was the review of frontline services. A total of 11 critical frontline services were reviewed and evaluated by the CAS and the CEB. Among these were the passport processing (DFA); driver's licensing (LTO-DOTC); investigation services (DOJ); land titling (DOJ and NALTDRA); duty exemption and import clearance (NEDA); processing of documents of OCWs (POEA); NBI clearance; and, facilitation of investment applications (DTI). The review also focused on the efficiency of revenue-generating agencies, namely: BIR, BOC, and EIIB.

The heads of these agencies were asked to present to the CEB, the CAS, and finally to the President and the Cabinet the status of measures and innovations that they introduced in their offices. The reforms included simplification and reduction in the number of steps, signatories, and requirements. Results of the simplification of systems and procedures showed a dramatic improvement in the delivery of frontline services.

Among the major policy and management initiatives which went through the CEB included the proposed Civil Service Code which was certified as an administration bill, and the Performance Contract for Government Officials which was adopted by the Cabinet. The conduct of Regional Development Council (RDC) - Agency Consultation in order to reconcile the annual national budget proposals of government agencies with the different regions was a practice suggested by the CEB.

In 1989, coordination and interface of the CEB and the Development Administration Committee (DAC), an interagency body under NEDA, was effected to achieve consistency in policy recommendations and other measures being adopted, nonduplication of work program, and desirable sequencing of

administrative innovations and government reforms to reinforce each other.

The Office of the President also tasked the Development Academy of the Philippines to formulate and implement a continuing training program for government executives called the "Managing the Bureaucracy for Results", or MBR. On the occasion of the first MBR batch graduation, President Aquino gave the following instructions: "I want the public income statement to show a profit, a just return on the tremendous investment in taxpayers' money that is being made. Next, let us focus on our activities let us make it easy for our clients to avail of our services. Graft and corruption grows with discretion and regulatory functions. I support the initiative to Do Away with Red Tape, in which the public will be asked to rank each department according to the complexity and length of their procedures, and its insistence on regulating the private economy. The most complex will be the first to be trimmed on the chopping block".

Moreover, through a joint collaboration between the Civil Service Commission and the U.P. College of Public Administration, a roundtable discussion on "Redefining the Discipline of Public Administration" was held on November 6, 1989.

The CAS, through its Committee on Energizing the Bureaucracy was also tasked to implement the review process for all executive departments.

With the assistance of the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) and the CSC, the CAS-CEB also embarked on an extensive review of agency mandates. A study group was convened to develop the guidelines relative to the definition of departments' mandates and identification and prioritization of agency functions and activities.

Problem-Solving Sessions

An "alert memo" from Budget Secretary Guillermo Carague to then Cabinet Secretary Jose de Jesus on May 10, 1988 expressed concern over the worsening delays in project implementation. Out of 20 very large, foreign-funded projects being implemented by the government, the alert memo identified at least 10 projects as delayed. The subject was immediately taken up in the next Cabinet meeting where President Aquino issued instructions to reverse the situation.

The proposal to immediately hold **Problem-Solving Sessions** or PSS was approved by the President. All PSS were held in the regions under the auspices of

the Regional Development Councils (RDCs), the first series of which were undertaken by the **Cabinet Action Committee on Implementation Assistant (CACIA)** from 1988-89.

The CACIA, main implementor of the PSS, was composed of the Cabinet Secretary, Secretary of Budget and Management, NEDA Director-General, Presidential Adviser on Public Resource Utilization, and the CORD for each region. The Office of the Cabinet Secretary served as the overall coordinator and secretariat to the CACIA.

Standard operating procedures of CACIA usually began with interagency consultations at the national level to discuss the problems and issues identified by the RDCs. Then, regional PSS were held by CACIA with all concerned RDC members. Finally, a Cabinet-level field visit to project sites were conducted. CACIA was successful and a valued PSS implementor since CACIA members had power and authority to make on-the-spot decisions or clarify positions on specific policy issues.

For every PSS, CACIA submitted a comprehensive report covering 1) general problem areas for policy decisions, and 2) agency-specific problem areas for resolution. Pre-implementation, during

implementation, and post-implementation policy and operational gaps were also identified. The report contained what CACIA had accomplished and identified further actions from concerned agencies.

Various other interventions were initiated by the CACIA as an offshoot of PSS.

Institutional development at the regional and local levels were advanced with the formulation and adoption of the Regional Project Monitoring and Evaluation System (RPMES) which CACIA introduced during its regional consultations with RDCs. The System prescribed a standard monitoring and evaluation system for all development projects (economic, social, infrastructure, etc.) which included projects contained in the Regional Development Investment Program (RDIP) and other foreign and locally-funded projects not included in the RDIP but which were implemented at the regional level. All Project Monitoring Committees at various levels created through Memorandum Order No. 175 assumed the lead role.

Another institutional development measure supported by CACIA was the adoption of the Framework and Methodology for Identifying/Prioritizing

Projects in the RDIP. This operational methodology of project prioritization took effect after the Integrated Area Development (IAD) project packages and their respective project components were identified.

The President's Regional Consultations:

As a follow-through initiative, the President presided over consultative meetings with representatives from regions in 1990 and 1991. **Presidential Regional Consultations (PRC)** started as a forum to allow local officials from the regions to directly bring the most serious developmental concerns of their constituencies to the President's attention. These meetings were originally called PSS Part II since these were primarily conceived as venues for identifying and resolving policy and procedural problems affecting regional development.

In the first sessions, discussions centered on requests for national assistance to relieve basic "lacks", i.e., lack of project funds, lack of roads, lack of schools, etc. In succeeding months, however, the PRC evolved into a slightly different, albeit, more positive arena for discussions where not only problems were taken up but also the accomplishments and contributions of the respective regions to national development.

These meetings were increasingly used by the President to solicit regional cooperation and support for her major programs and projects. For instance, President Aquino's call for unity and greater cooperation as envisioned under the KABISIG Program was spelled out during her PSS with Region III. Likewise, the President's appeal for calm and sobriety immediately after the July 1990 earthquake was made during her session with the officials of Region I.

In retrospect, therefore, the PRCs which were initially conceived to be a mere clearinghouse for problems and complaints, unwittingly became a strategic vehicle for greater state advocacy and consolidation toward a more effective grassroots-based development agenda.

The PRC/PSS involved two stages: the first consisted of the identification and prioritization of issues at the local levels; while the second was where local officials presented their issues to the President for resolution.

The PRC/PSS process was initiated by the Regional Development Councils in coordination with their respective CORDs, by conducting preliminary consultations in the region. A total of 17 regional consultations with the President were held in 1990 and 1991.

Panibagong Sigla 2000

Pursuant to Cabinet Resolution No. 1, s. 1991, Panibagong Sigla 2000 (PS 2000) was launched in March 1991 as a government-wide campaign to revitalize the Philippine public service. The following concerns were addressed by PS 2000: 1) gaps in government policies and programs; 2) institutionalization of reforms through the active participation of government employees in making the bureaucracy more responsive and supportive of the objectives embodied in the Philippine Development Plan; and 3) preparation of the public service for the challenges and opportunities in the year 2000. Cabinet Resolution No. 1 enjoined heads of government offices to actively support and participate in the various activities and programs of PS 2000.

One of the objectives of PS 2000 was to build a data and suggestion base which would be used to develop a reform package for the bureaucracy. Towards this end, PS 2000 implemented a three-track program. The first track involved the organization of 13 Task Forces whose main function was to study the following identified priority areas of PS 2000 on a macro perspective: 1) recruitment and selection; 2) performance appraisal; 3) unionism; 4) managerial effectiveness; 5) human resource development; 6) alter-

native modes of service delivery; 7) incentives and disincentives; 8) administrative rules and regulations; 9) retirement and separation; 10) compensation and position classification; 11) frontline services; 12) local government bureaucracy; and 13) cutting wastage in government.

Each Task Force formulated and implemented their respective programs and strategies. Various forms of consultation e.g., roundtable discussions, surveys, brainstorming sessions, and symposia were conducted by the Task Forces. For example, the First Congress of Senior Government Executives was convened on May 31, 1991. The participants to the said Congress came up with recommendations on the issues presented by the Task Force convenors. To improve frontline services, the senior government executives recommended the improvement of working conditions and work attitudes of employees delivering frontline services and provision of an incentive system, both monetary and nonmonetary, and the establishment of better coordination and liaison between and among concerned government agencies, among others.

The second track covered the conduct of employee assemblies at the agency and regional levels with PS 2000 as the agenda. Government employees

who participated in these assemblies identified problems hindering the effective delivery of public service as well as suggested solutions to solve these problems. These employee assemblies culminated in the 2nd National Congress of Workers in Government held on September 18-19, 1991. The outputs during the agency and regional assemblies served as the main document for discussion in the National Congress of Workers. The output of the National Congress, contained in a document entitled *PS 2000: The Workers' Agenda*, included an action plan for public service reforms. The Workers Agenda was submitted to the Department Secretaries for consideration and possible implementation, and to the Speaker of the House and Senate President for inclusion in the legislative agenda.

The third track was implemented to allow employees and private individuals to give their ideas and suggestions directly to the PS 2000 Secretariat. Issues and recommendations raised by the employees at various PS 2000 fora and letters sent by private individuals to PS 2000 also served as inputs to the Task Forces in preparing issue papers on their respective areas of concern. The issue papers contained the following: challenges/opportunities of each area taking into account the environment, the client system,

the technology, the practitioners; the three most significant problems and likely causes; present practices at government and agency levels for maintenance, refinements, and wide application; and recommendations for immediate executive action or inclusion in the legislative agenda.

PS 2000 was formally terminated in June 1992. Among others, PS 2000 can be credited for providing the venue through which various sectors such as government officials and employees, academe, NGOs and private individuals, and elected local officials were consulted on major concerns affecting the whole bureaucracy. The organization of Task Forces as vehicles to evolve proposals for reforms and innovations in government provided opportunities for the active involvement of senior officials and public sector unions.

These consultations resulted in the formulation of *Panibagong Sigla 2000: Shaping the Future of Philippine Public Service*, a document which sets new directions and lays proposed policies for the revitalization of the public service. Through these efforts, it is hoped that by the year 2000 and even beyond, the Philippine public service would be a dynamic institution imbued with a client-focused service culture. The said document was

endorsed by President Aquino to incoming President Ramos.

Memorandum Of Undertaking: A Public Sector Welfare And Development Program

The welfare of public servants had always been among the top priorities of the Aquino government. In the light of the increasing cost of living, the socioeconomic and political situation, and the painful truth of poverty confronting most of the government workers, the national government assumed a significant role in improving the quality of life of its employees.

The 1987 Constitution provides for the establishment of public sector unionism to allow government workers to collectively articulate their terms for better employment and equal exercise of rights with its private sector counterparts. Pursuant to this, the Compensation Review Panel (CRP), representing employee associations in government, formally negotiated with the government representatives in November 1990.

Responding to this clamor, the national government entered into a Memorandum of Undertaking (MOU) for Improved Public Service with the government workers through the CRP on April

30, 1991. The undertaking, effective May 1, 1991 to April 30, 1992, subject to renewal, was envisioned to promote the economic well-being and functioning capacity of state employees by augmenting their income-earning ability through the institutionalization of self-help mechanism. The agreement sought to provide additional benefits to government workers that will encourage greater resolve towards increased productivity and better discipline through improved working standards by both those who manage the bureaucracy and those who compose its rank-and-file.

On the part of the national government, Administrative Order No. 225 was issued implementing the following provisions of the Memorandum of Undertaking: 1) P7.2 billion Personnel Emergency Relief Allowance (PERA) for government employees below Salary Grade 24 effective January 1991; 2) P10 million from the President's Social Fund as seed money for the Government Employees' Cooperative; 3) monetization of leave credits equivalent to the annual vacation leave earned by a government employee; 4) formation of a Joint Council which will recommend to the President the appointment of qualified rank-and-file government workers to the boards of GOCCs; 5) designation of a health and welfare officer in every government department or

agency who will develop employee welfare programs within existing budgetary limits; 6) P50 million educational loan fund from the GSIS for government employees and their dependents; and 7) creation of the Public Sector Compensation Review Panel that will review compensation and other benefits of government workers.

Among the government's commitments, all, except the formal constitution of the Joint Council tasked to recommend to the President the appointment of qualified rank-and-file government employees to the Boards of GOCCs, have been acted upon. All monetary benefits were at once released. The P10 million seed fund had been made available to government cooperatives to finance livelihood projects and enterprises of government workers.

On the other hand, the government workers agreed to adhere to legal means of redressing grievances and to avoid work stoppages that prejudice service delivery; establish individual standards of output and behavior to improve performance; observe the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Government Officials; support programs to improve the quality of life and accelerate service delivery; report and document irregularities, fiscal, or otherwise; observe po-

litical neutrality and nonpartisanship in the delivery of vital services; and participate in the development of government employees through responsible unionism.

The MOU has indeed been instrumental in providing economic assistance to government workers as well as motivating them to be more productive and efficient so much so that the CRP will renegotiate for another MOU with the Ramos government.

Setting Goals And Presidential Priorities

Presidential initiatives were not only directed at accelerating implementation of existing or proposed programs or policies. They were also undertaken to set direction or basic agenda for presidential priorities. The following describes at least three areas where specific presidential attention was focused: 1) the PRO-Poor program, 2) improved administration of justice, and 3) promotion of public ethics and accountability.

Program To Refocus Orientation To The Poor (PRO-Poor)

The need to alleviate poverty stems from the principles of upholding the right

to life and respecting human rights. The goal of uplifting the lot of the poor also emanates from the recognition that human resources are the most important assets of any society.

It was, therefore, a matter of urgent concern for the Aquino administration when the 1988 Family Income Survey concluded that the bottom 30 percent of the Filipino population were not benefiting from the programs and projects of the government. Moreover, the same survey showed that low-income families lacked productive assets or control over such assets, had little knowledge in their productive activities, had limited financial and human capital, and received minimal social services.

In July 1989, during the joint CORDs and RDC chairmen meeting with the President, the latter instructed the RDCs to review all government programs being implemented in the regions to determine whether these programs were really benefiting the poor and to recommend refocusing of priorities and targets, as may be necessary.

In a parallel effort, a workshop among senior agency planners was held in October 1989 which formulated the Program to Refocus Orientation to the Poor. Prior to this, in September 1989, a

CAS Workshop on Poverty Alleviation had been held wherein it was stressed that policy issues should be first addressed in order to make clear directions of programs and projects. In December 1989, the President issued Executive Order No. 370 launching the Program.

PRO-Poor is a deliberate effort by the Aquino presidency to direct the attention of all implementing agencies of the national government to the problem of poverty. It was envisioned to be a collective endeavor to better orchestrate the delivery of basic services all over the country. The goal of the PRO-Poor initiative was to ensure that the programmed projects were indeed delivered to the identified Low Income Municipalities (LIM) at the earliest possible time.

Specifically, the Program aimed: 1) to accelerate socioeconomic development in the rural areas through affirmative programs of actions; 2) to benefit the most depressed municipalities; 3) to pursue coordinated delivery of government services; and 4) to undertake local institution building. A total of 450 municipalities were covered by the program through a phased implementation from 1990-92. In 1990, 169 municipalities had been included in the program.

In preparing for the framework of the program, workshops were initiated to

provide appreciation of the extent of the regional poverty situation and trigger, on the part of the regional line agencies and local government units, the adoption of poverty-focused program and project development processes.

Executive Order No. 370 directed 17 line agencies of the government to participate in the Program. Of the total, eight agencies maintained municipal presence level while the remaining nine agencies maintained presence either on a regional, provincial, or municipal level. A PRO-Poor Standing Committee was created composed of senior level officials from the 17 line agencies and chaired by the Presidential Adviser on Rural Development. In addition, an Executive Committee was created to attend to the immediate needs of the Program. Moreover, a Program Secretariat at the Office of the President was created to provide staff support.

At the municipal level, the Program utilized existing structures, i.e. Municipal Development Councils (MDCs), whenever possible. In municipalities where MDCs were not operative, municipal action teams were established. These teams were headed by the mayors and composed of municipal officers of line agencies with the DILG municipal office as secretariat.

The second level of program implementation assumed that additional resources (i.e., in terms of additional number of projects, increase in area coverage and program offering) would be made available by line agencies to selected LIMs. However, increases in resources did not mean new appropriations. The Program depended on existing line agency resources released from its original budgetary appropriations and made available for realignment to the Program.

Successive cycles of an Expanded Agency Program and Coordinated Services Delivery were intended to build up capability for an eventual Integrated Municipal Planning and Implementation Program which was the long-term goal of PRO-Poor.

Improved Administration Of Justice

The administration of justice through the rule of law is the bedrock of democratic institutions. It is a responsibility shared by the entire machinery of government. The judiciary is charged with speedy case-flow and the prompt delivery of judicial services. While the legislative is tasked with updating the legal system by continually instituting law reforms, the executive branch is expected to enhance prosecutory services, extend the reach of the citizens' legal assistance

office, improve the services of law enforcement agencies, and expand alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Efforts to improve the administration of justice for each and every citizen, therefore, must address the whole government system.

On February 2, 1988, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines made a presentation before the members of the Supreme Court on their research findings on the causes of slow case processing. Their report indicated that 1) only 30 percent of all cases filed demanding 80 percent of judges' time go through full blown trial; and 2) trial period was the longest phase of case-processing time. For criminal cases, it ranged from 15 to 894 days. For civil cases, it ranged from 148 to 913 days, with some case even taking 10 to 20 years to resolve. Postponement was the primary cause of delay in the trial period for both criminal and civil cases.

On April 4, 1988, during a Malacañang Executive Staff meeting, President Aquino issued a directive to address the problems related to the administration of justice. Specifically, the President wanted following problems addressed: a) delay in the disposition of cases; b) graft and corruption in the judiciary; c) limited access of the poor to legal services; d) incompetence and ig-

and the Cabinet in coordinating the efforts of the various departments in fighting graft and corruption and in promoting the ethical standards of public service in the executive branch. Then Cabinet Secretary Jose P. De Jesus served as the chairman of the interagency presidential body.

One of the first activities undertaken by the PCPEA was the conduct of a systematic study on the government's capability to investigate and prosecute erring public officials and employees. Based on the study, the PCPEA recommended a three-pronged approach to strengthen the government's anti-corruption programs, namely: 1) strengthen the investigation and prosecution capability of the government, primarily through the creation of the Office of the Ombudsman; 2) exhaust available administrative sanctions for more immediate preventive and punitive response to erring public servants; and 3) promote active community involvement in partnership with government, in curbing irregularities in the public sector.

Other activities undertaken by the Presidential Committee included the following: 1) acted on public complaints and other graft and corruption charges against government officials; 2) coordinated the activities of the Anti-Graft Ac-

tion Center and Action Officers in various departments; 3) evaluated the effectivity of Action Plans of various departments; and 4) participated in the deliberations of the bill creating the Office of the Ombudsman.

The PCPEA prepared the groundwork for the creation of the Office of the Ombudsman which came into existence pursuant to a constitutional mandate on May 12, 1987. The Committee gave a series of briefings for the incoming Ombudsman, Conrado Vasquez, on the ongoing anti-graft initiatives which might be continued by the latter's office. President Aquino, herself, instructed the Committee to help look for an office for the Ombudsman. The PCPEA then prepared its terminal report and ceased to exist.

The PCPEA is a case where the Office of the President intervened to address a major area of public concern. In this case, a Committee had to be created to fill in the vacuum prior to the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman. If only to assure the general public that the government is not indifferent to the question of public accountability, particularly in the period immediately after witnessing the excesses of authoritarian government, the Presidential Committee has already achieved its role.

On February 20, 1989, President Aquino signed into law Republic Act 6713, otherwise known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. The impact of the Code may not be immediate, but

with persistence and leadership by example, the internalization of set ethical standards provided by the law will have lasting effect in the promotion of integrity in public service long after the term of the Aquino administration.

4

Evaluating Systems

Hand in hand with the various management systems and technologies that the Aquino administration utilized towards the realization of its agenda of action, evaluating tools were used. These served as valuable planning and feedback mechanisms that enabled the executive branch not only to clarify and attain its goals but also to leave a legacy of smooth transition for the next administration.

The Agency Mandate Review

Another major initiative toward energizing the bureaucracy was the con-

duct of the Agency Mandate Review (AMR) which was aimed at streamlining government reorganization, activities, and operations. This initiative was not a totally new process. It was part of the continuing process that began with the government-wide reorganization following the February revolution: the review of agency thrusts and policy issues and the regular medium term planning exercises undertaken by the agencies under the Development Administration Framework of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

In her speech at the Managing the Bureaucracy for Results (MBR) graduation rites in June 1988, President Aquino said: "Each department should focus on its mandate. Between now and the year's end, I want each department to review its mandate and channel its energy resources exclusively to that. If its mandate is agriculture or natural resources, then clearly it should involve itself with nothing more than promoting agricultural productivity or conserving the national patrimony. I am asking the Department Secretaries to submit to me a list of things that their departments should stop doing, continue doing, or go into – in line with their respective mandates. We shall judge their performance against it ... I want you to clarify your mandate, define your appropriate function and thereby justify your continued incumbency".

The President's statement to her department heads in her State of the Nation Address in July 1988 also added to the urgency and importance of the task: "... produce concrete results on your department programs – or you are out". Clarity of mission was not only desirable, it was, in fact, indispensable.

The overreaching goal of the exercise was the greater clarification and crystallization of the Department vision for the

Secretary and his key staff. With a clearer and more focused vision, the Department should have been able to:

- o conserve its resources for doing quality work along key functions only;
- o be held accountable by the President for its performance in identified "must" programs and projects consistent with its key functions;
- o energize its staff and mobilize support from its partner institutions in a more focused and consistent manner; and
- o achieve more observable and greater impact on its clientele, and thus enhance the overall credibility of the government.

Towards this end, the Cabinet Assistance System, through its committee on Energizing the Bureaucracy, was tasked to undertake the procedure for the review process which involved all executive departments. With the assistance of the Development Academy of the Philippines and the Civil Service Commission, the CAS-CEB embarked on an extensive review of agency mandates. A study group was convened to develop the guidelines relative to the definition of department mandates and the identification and prioritization of agency func-

tions and activities pursuant to the following objectives:

- o A clear definition of the department's mandate and mission that will answer in concise and measurable terms the question: What business should the department be in?

- o Identification of the department's essential services, policy concerns, and programs consistent with the redefined mandate and mission.

- o Identification of the department's peripheral functions which will be stopped or diminished.

The review which took about two months to complete, from June to July 1988, covered all departments beginning with the "showcase" departments: two agencies that focused principally on service delivery, namely, the DPWH and the DSWD; two agencies focused principally on regulation, promotion, and advocacy, i.e., the DOJ and the DOLE; and two agencies with a fair mix of both, namely, the DA and the DOTC.

Indeed, it is worth noting that the most significant accomplishment of the AMR was in the area of enhancing interdepartmental coordination and interfacing – a major factor in the success-

ful implementation of government programs and projects.

For instance, through the review process, department commitments were identified and clarified as regards the implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), a landmark legislation of the Aquino administration. With the DAR assuming the role of overall management and responsibility for the program, other concerned departments resolved and committed to provide the necessary support services to the program. For its part, the DOJ had attended to the reorganization of the National Land Titles and Deeds Registration and Administration (NALTDRA) to improve its land registration machinery, thereby meeting the needs and demands attendant to the implementation of CARP. Such demands included the processing and verification of documents relative to the issuance of decrees of registration and issuance of titles of lands covered by CARP, the identification and delineation of boundaries of ancestral lands, and the determination of the rightful occupants. On one hand, the DA had adjusted its policies to provide ample support to the implementation of the program. This included, among others, the facilitation of market access, and the implementation of empowerment program for the program beneficiaries. On

the other hand, the DPWH had committed to attend to the infrastructure support of the program.

As a symbolic gesture, departments concerned with agricultural and rural development had signed a Memorandum of Agreement to forge cooperation and linkage from the national down to the local level, thus, effecting better coordination in the implementation of government programs and projects.

Another important milestone accomplished by the exercise was the delineation and clarification of the functions and responsibilities of the DSWD and the DOH regarding the population issue. As a result of the review, DSWD was mandated to take care of the overall population development program, while DOH was tasked to attend to the family planning component of the population program.

Stop, Start And Continue: Towards A More Focused Implementation Of Department Mandate

The mandate review enabled the departments and agencies to set clear, focused, and streamlined procedures in the operationalization of their respective mandates and missions. The review proc-

ess was characterized by the identification of activities that each department should stop, start, or continue doing.

Under the "start" list, for instance, the DOJ committed to, and worked on developing the capability of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) to issue clearance certificates not only in the Manila central office but also in several strategic areas.

Under its "continue doing" list, the DPWH endeavored to complete the provision of safe water facilities to 90 percent of the rural population before the end of the Aquino administration. Corollary to this, the DPWH committed to finish the construction of safe school-buidings to house a minimum of 40 students per room.

The review and evaluation process which the DFA undertook was focused mainly on the area of consular services and was very visible as it involved a frontline service felt by the many overseas contract workers.

The Transition Program

To ensure a smooth and orderly transfer of power to the next administration, President Aquino directed the for-

mulation of a transition program. Consequently, the first-ever comprehensive program for transition was conceptualized and approved by the President in anticipation of events and scenarios following the end of her term.

The transition program involved three tracks, namely: 1) effective management of the macro-political and economic situation in the first half of 1992; 2) provision of technical and administrative assistance to ensure an orderly beginning for the next administration; and, 3) documentation of the accomplishments and legacies of the Aquino administration. Executive Secretary Franklin Drilon is in charge of the three tracks, assisted by Cabinet Cluster E, and the Presidential Management Staff Head for Tracks 2 and 3.

Comprehensive transition management plans for Tracks 2 and 3 covering the implementing structures, specific outputs and responsible agencies, guidelines for preparing reports and timetables for submission of outputs were drawn up.

Under Track 2, Organizational Transition Reports were prepared by each department and agency containing major accomplishments and pending issues re-

quiring immediate action by the incoming head of office. Concerned government agencies also prepared Special Transition Reports providing information to the new President and Cabinet members on critical pending matters affecting the economy or national security, e.g., rationalization of the government corporate sector, government reorganization, comprehensive agrarian reform program.

For Track 3, a record of the major legacies of the Aquino administration was produced for distribution to local and foreign media, libraries, embassies, research, and other institutions. The record included a videotape and a publication series highlighting the most significant accomplishments of the presidency.

As part of the transition, the Cabinet Office Automation System which linked Cabinet members with the Malacañang computer system was established and made operational. Likewise, special briefings for the new President and the new members of the Cabinet were planned to familiarize them with the workings of the bureaucracy, Congress, and media.

To ensure continuity and stability of government operations, the transition

plan also provided for the preparation of a "red book" or the list of political appointments that can be made by the new President, and a "blue book" or a database of career executive service officers.

An explanation of the President's appointing powers as provided for in the Constitution and the rules and regulations of the Civil Service Commission were also presented.

President Aquino confers with Senate President Jovito Salonga and House Speaker Ramon V. Mitra before addressing delegates to the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization (AIPO) 10th Working Committee and General Assembly at the Manila Hotel's Fiesta Pavilion.

President Aquino together with Vice President Salvador H. Laurel, Executive Secretary Joker P. Arroyo, and Cabinet Secretary Jose de Jesus during a dialogue on Aug. 26, 1986 with local officials and congressmen of Region III.







President Aquino receives from Cecilia Muñoz Palma, president of the Constitutional Commission, Pilipino and English versions of the draft Constitution in simple turn-over ceremonies on Oct. 15 at Malacañang's Heroes Hall.



President Aquino signs Republic Act 6734 creating an Autonomous region in Muslim Mindanao. Looking on from left, (seated) are Senate President Jovito Salonga, Representatives Celestino Martinez and Guimo Matalam. Behind them are members of the congressional committee that worked on the Organic Act.



Below:
The President convenes a meeting with the elected officials of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao on November 6, 1990 in Cotabato City to discuss their proposed program for their region.



President Aquino is joined by Senate President Jovito Salonga, Speaker Ramon Mitra, Executive Secretary Drilon, Interior and Local Governments Secretary Luis Santos and local officials during the signing of the Local Government Code at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang on October 10, 1991.

The President banters with governors.



**President Aquino with
Philippine National Oil
Company (PNOC) presi-
dent Manuel Estrella
upon arrival at the
Petron Bataan Refinery
grounds in Limay,
Bataan. Also in photo is
PNOC chairman
Benjamin Diokno.**





President Aquino smells a leaf of lagundi, a bronchodilator and analgesic-antipyretic herb, during the inauguration of the Cotabato Herbal Pharmaceutical Processing Facility in Cotabato City on November 15, 1988.



President Aquino inspects progress of the construction of the 35 Km. road connecting Lopez and Catanaun, Quezon.



Above:

The President in a prawn farm with Gov. Bitay Lacson.

President Aquino inspects a dressed chicken during a tour at the newly inaugurated P32 million chicken dressing processing plant of the Agro-Food Processing and Development Corporation (AFPDC) at Balagtas, Bulacan.





President Aquino tries the new Automated Telephone Assistance System (ATAS) during its launching at the 34th anniversary rites of the Social Security System (SSS).

President Aquino is shown with Carmelita Salgado, Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. (FTPI) president and Evangeline Sayas, principal of the Anihan Rural Center for Professional Development (ARCPD) upon her arrival at Calamba, Laguna on Nov. 29, 1990.



Below:

President Aquino attends the inauguration of a P25 million post-harvest facility and warehouse in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija on April 29, 1992. In photo are: (from left) Fr. Rene Mangahas, president of the Alay Tangkilik Foundation, Inc. (ATFI) and Technology and Livelihood Resource Center (TLRC) group manager Sylvia Ordenez.





President Corazon C. Aquino plants the symbolic first tree that launched the National Reforestation Program on June 6, 1986 at the National Parks and Wildlife Nature Center in Quezon City. One hundred million trees are expected to be planted by some 2 million Boy Scouts and 28 million teachers and students in this nationwide reforestation efforts.

President Aquino inaugurates the Bongao water system during her visit to Tawi-Tawi on May 15, 1989. The system delivers potable water to 700 households 24 hours a day and will benefit an additional 300 households by year end.



President Aquino assisted by Japanese Ambassador Kiyoshi Sumiya, unveils the marker of the new Bureau of Food and Drugs' offices and laboratories in Alabang, Muntinlupa, Rizal during the inauguration of the multi-million peso modern complex on April 30, 1989. Seen at left is Health Secretary Alfredo Bengzon.





Above. President Aquino drops the first coin to symbolize the launching of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' (DENR) CONSERVATION PROGRAM, a project involving the solicitation of coin donations for the conservation of rare and endangered plants and animals at the start of a Cabinet meeting. Looking on are DENR Secretary Fulgencio Factoran, Jr. (behind the President), and Secretaries (L-R) Vicente Jayme of Finance, Carlos Dominguez of Agriculture and Food, Rainerio Reyes of Transportation and Communications, Franklin Drilon of Labor and Employment, and Jose Concepcion, Jr. of Trade and Industry.





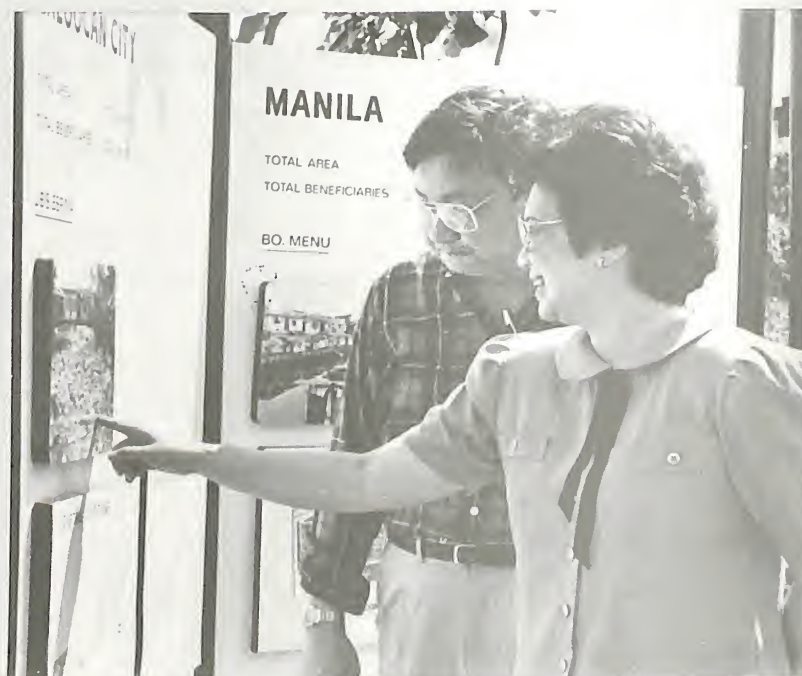
Above. President Aquino discusses Executive Order 350 providing guidelines for granting amnesty to rebel returnees with governors and mayors during a meeting at Malacañang Palace. In photo are (from left) NEDA Director General Solita Monsod, Public Works Secretary Fiorello Estuar (partly hidden), Local Government Secretary Luis Santos, Executive Secretary Catalino Macaraig, Jr., Cabinet Secretary Jose de Jesus, League of Governors President Governor Luis Villafuerte, Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, Budget Secretary Guillermo Carague, Finance Undersecretary Victor Maalincag and Cabinet Undersecretary Aniceto Sobrepeña.

The President in Bicol to meet with local leaders and residents.



President Aquino witnessed the signing of the memorandum of agreement launching the \$100 million Countryside Loan Fund. Signing for government is Finance Secretary Jesus Estanislao (left of President) and Land Bank President Deogracias Vistan (extreme right).

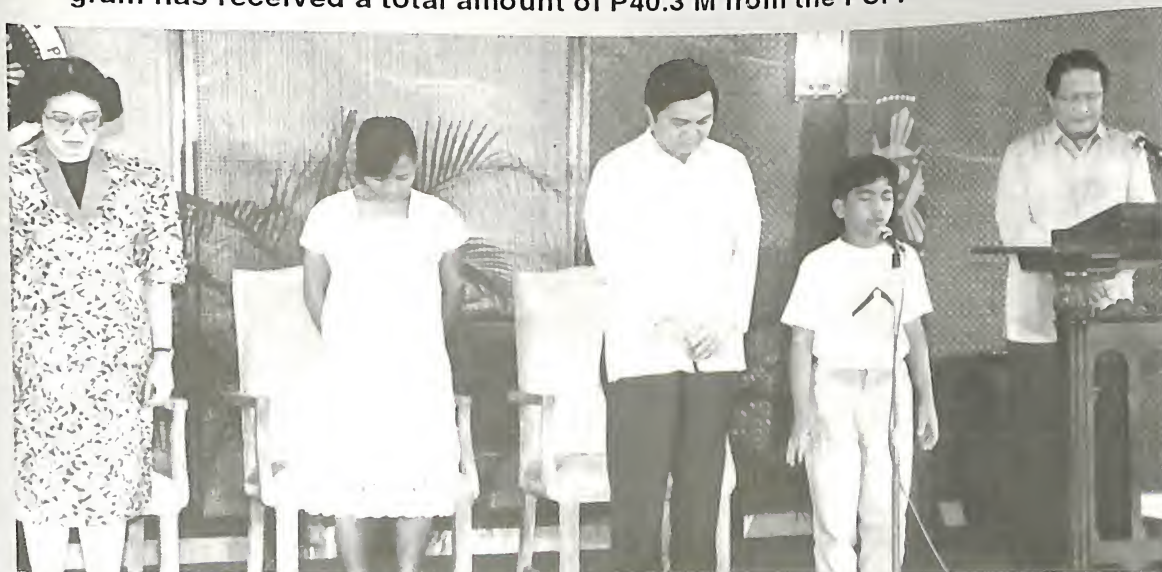
President Aquino views an Exhibit prepared by the National Housing Authority (NHA) on the 17 slum improvement projects it will undertake in Metro Manila. With the President is NHA General Manager Lito Atienza.





President Aquino meets the officials of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) who presented her with an 18-month accomplishment report on the Samar Integrated Development Program (SIDP) of the government on Nov. 11, 1991. The report focuses mainly on the poverty alleviation and livelihood program of the private sector in Samar. In photo with the President are; (from left) Ma. Luisa Perez-Rubio, PBSP president; Andres Soriano III, PBSP chairman and chairman of San Miguel Corporation; Press Secretary Tomas Gomez III, SIDP executive director and Agriculture Undersecretary Dante Barboza.

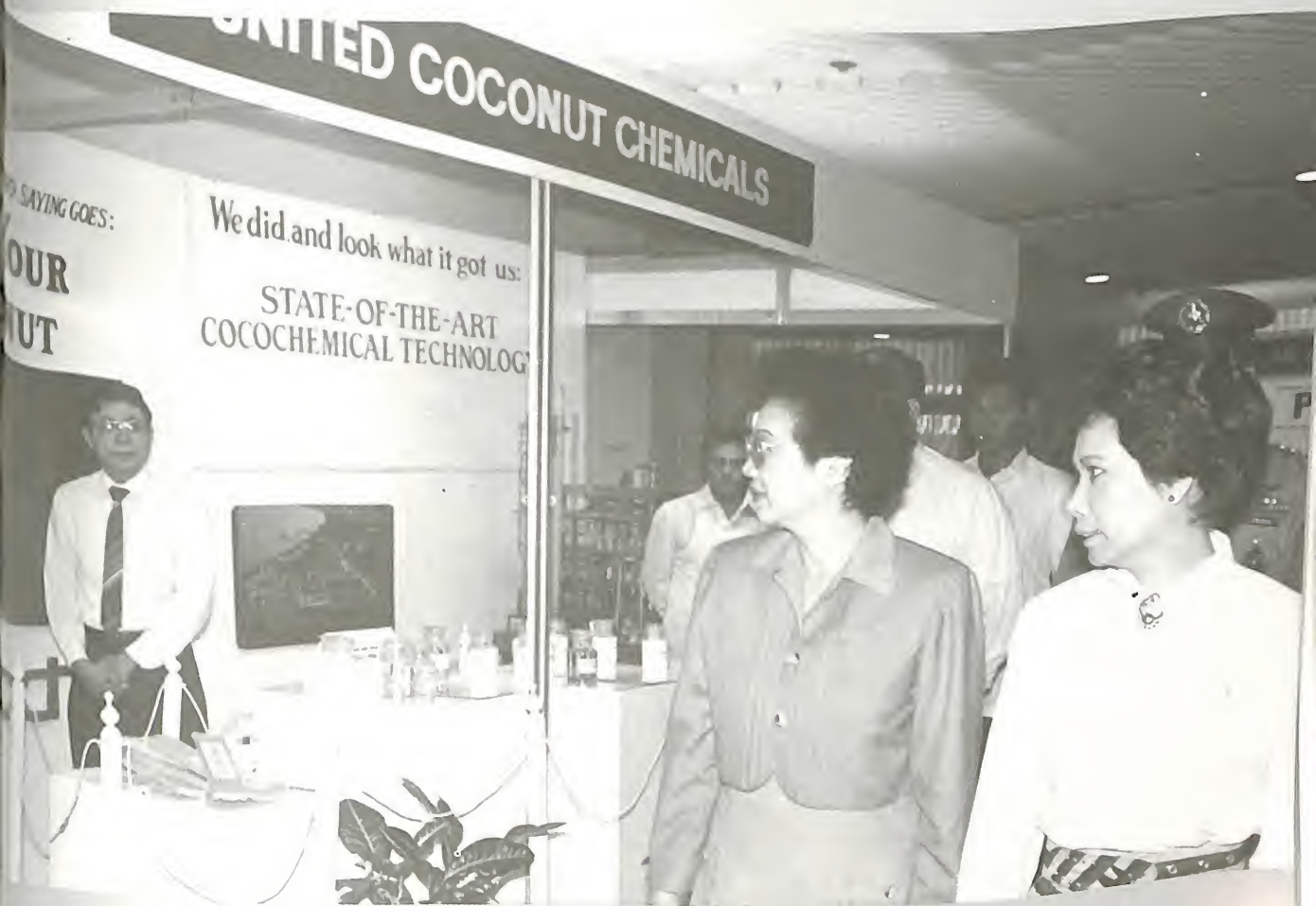
A streetchild leads the invocation during the program for beneficiaries of the streetchildren program of the PSF held at the Heroes Hall in Malacañang last January 21, 1992. The President's streetchildren program has received a total amount of P40.3 M from the PSF.





President Aquino signs a memorandum of Clarification and Service Contract with Adrian Loader, Shell Exploration Philippines president (second from right) and Carlos Contreras, Occidental Exploration Philippines general manager (extreme right) for the exploration and possible development and utilization of natural gas from the Camago field in Palawan. Also in photo are (from left) Presidential Assistant for Energy Affairs Wenceslao de la Paz and Executive Secretary Oscar Orbos.

President Aquino signs into law RA 7042 otherwise known as the Foreign Investment Act of 1991 liberalizing the entry of foreign investment to the country. Among the witnesses to the signing are: (from left) Senator Vicente Paterno, Senate President Jovito Salonga, Representatives Margarito Teves and Emigdio Tanjuatco.



President Aquino looks at chemical products made from coconut during a tour of booths showcasing Filipino chemical technology at the Manila Garden Hotel on Feb. 9, 1989. The President viewed the exhibits after addressing members of the Philippine Institute of Chemical Engineers (PICHE), which is celebrating its 50th year.



President Aquino witnesses on Sept. 18, 1987 the signing of the \$270 million assistance from the Italian government to the Philippines by Senator Gilberto Bonalumi, Italian Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, and Director General Solita Monsod of NEDA. Also witnessing the signing are Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs Manuel Yan and Italian Ambassador Mario Crema.

President Corazon C. Aquino meets with (L-R) Senate President Jovito Salonga, Vice President Salvador Laurel, Ambassador Emmanuel Pelaez and other members of the Senate, the House and the military at the State Dining Room where they agreed to organize the Regional Consultative Commission which will assist and participate in the enactment of the organic act for the autonomous government in Mindanao.





President Aquino receives a report on the debt reduction package proposed by the Philippines and received favorably by its American commercial creditor banks from Central Bank Gov. Jose Cuisia (left) and Finance Undersecretary Tomas Apacible (extreme right). The package is expected to save the Philippines more than \$2.3 billion over the next six years in interest relief, and reduce the country's debt stock by more than \$1.5 billion. Also in photo (second from right) is Executive Secretary Franklin Drilon.

KABISIG
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
Agency President CORAZON C. AQUINO
GUEST of HONOR and SPEAKER
JUNE 11, 1991
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE KABISIG WAY TOWARDS THE 21st CENTURY



The President graces Kabisig National Assembly.



President Aquino examines a tent shown to her by Housing and Urban Coordinating Council (HUDCC) Chairman Teodoro Katigbak (left) during the celebration of the "Kabisig Housing Month" at Malacañang on June 24, 1991. The tent is part of the "evacuation kits" distributed by the Project Silungan and the HUDCC, Social Security System, Government Service Insurance System to victims of Mt. Pinatubo. Looking on are (from left) Zorayda Alonzo, chief executive of Pag-ibig Fund; Renato Valencia, SSS Administrator and Bulacan Governor Roberto Pagdanganan, director general of Kabisig.



President Aquino unveils the marker of the P10 million Magsaysay bridge in Dagupan, Pangasinan during the inauguration rites in the city. The bridge collapsed at the height of the July 1990 earthquake and was rebuilt by government in 11 months. In photo (from left) are former Defense Secretary Fidel Ramos, Rep. Jose de Venecia, Public Works Secretary Jose de Jesus, Dagupan Mayor Liberato Reyna, Senator Alberto Romulo and other well-wishers.

President Aquino, with Secretary Carague, PMS Head Sobrepena, and Press Undersecretary Paredes, inspects the relief goods for lahar victims in the various municipalities of Tarlac.





PMS Head Aniceto "Chito" Sobrepeña presents a program proposal for livelihood projects in areas affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption.



President Aquino swears into office retired Supreme Court Assoc. Justice Conrado M. Vasquez as Ombudsman.

Pres. Aquino welcomes Justice Irene R. Cortes, adviser of the Phil. Women's Judges Association during a courtesy call in Malacañang on Sept. 13, 1991. The President reiterated her call for the speedy administration of justice in the country to her guests (1-r) Justice Lorna dela Fuente, Justice Amuerfina Melencio-Herrera, president of the Association and Justice Carolina Grino-Aquino.





President Aquino inspects one of the 52 courtrooms of the P111 million Quezon City Hall of Justice which she inaugurated on Jan 24, 1992. The five-storey QC Hall of Justice stands on a 1.3 hectare lot beside the Quezon city Hall and is considered the biggest in the country today. With the President are (from left) Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin, QC Mayor Brigido Simon, Jr. and Chief Justice Andres Narvasa.

President Aquino receives from Dr. Rene Boliazer (in stripes) of Junior Drug Watch (Cebu Chapter) the folder containing signatures of 60,000 people favoring the restoration of the death penalty, during the launching of "Crimewatch" in Malacañang.





Inauguration of Tagum-Mati Road on May 4, 1992.

President Aquino inspects one of the brand new buses to be fielded under the "Hatid Sundo Bus" service, a Kabisig project of the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), Metro Manila Transit Corp. (MMTC) and the Metro Manila Jaycees.





President Aquino is greeted by Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin upon her arrival at the P367.425 million EDSA-Ortigas Avenue Interchange project. The Interchange project of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) was inaugurated on February 25, 1992.



President Aquino admires the facilities of the newly inaugurated Department of Education building at the P. Gomez Elementary School. The P11 million three-storey building has 22 classrooms. With the President are (from left) Education Secretary Isidro Cariño, Reps. Pablo Ocampo and Narciso Monfort and P. Gomez Principal Imelda G. Castro.



A schoolbuilding funded by the President's Social Fund which draws its resources from PAGCOR.



President Aquino is shown in photo with Fidel Ramos, her chosen successor, vice presidential bet Lito Osmena and the senatorial ticket of the LAKAS-NUCD at the Bacolod Convention Plaza Ballroom where she endorsed them to the political leaders of Negros Occidental on February 26, 1992.

